



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

April 29th, 2009

Honorable Congresswoman Niki Tsongas
U.S. House of Representatives
1607 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Tsongas:

We are writing to strongly support your request for High Priority Project (HPP) funding for Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). Bike and rail trails not only offer a creative use for old infrastructure, but help fill the void of safe and pleasant places to cycle and walk. We believe that the completion of these bike and rail trails will not only be a positive step towards protecting the environment, but will also enhance the quality of life in our districts and encourage healthier lifestyles. With historic underfunding of Transportation Enhancement projects like the BFRT, it is extremely valuable to have HPP funds allocated to the BFRT.

The BFRT is an extremely popular project supported by town and state elected officials, and by thousands of citizens. Phase 1 of the BFRT (which is just less than seven miles connecting the communities of Chelmsford and Westford) is currently under construction. Phase 2 (on former rail lines all currently owned by the Commonwealth and with various levels of design tasks completed for its various sub-phases) is about 12 miles in length. The Phase 3 Right-of-Way (currently owned by CSXT, but with all the rails and ties removed) is about 4.6 miles in length.

Besides Phase 1, which is almost completed, Phases 2A (Acton, Westford, Carlisle) and 2C (Concord) of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT), are the furthest along. Phase 2A and 2C towns (Acton, Carlisle, Concord and Westford) have overwhelmingly supported the BFRT in Town Meeting votes.

Phase 2B, which is currently part of the Concord Rotary Reconstruction project, and thus under the auspices of MassHighway will connect Phases 2A and 2C, and 25% design is currently ongoing. MassHighway held public workshops on June 3, 2008 and September 24, 2008 with widespread support.

Phase 3, which consists of 1.4 miles in Sudbury and 3.2 miles in Framingham, has made significant progress as well. In 2006 a feasibility study was completed by the Central Transportation Planning Staff, and concludes that Phase 3 is feasible and will move forward.

The BFRT enjoys wide support in our communities and in the region. Construction is almost completed on the first phase coming out of Lowell to Route 225 in Westford. Phase 2 covers about 8 miles from Route 225 through the rest of Westford, and through Carlisle, Acton and Concord to Powder Mill Road

near the Sudbury town line. In West Concord, the BFRT links to the Fitchburg Commuter Rail. The extension of the BFRT through Sudbury into Framingham is in an earlier design stage.

The Commonwealth is committed to the BFRT, demonstrated most notably with the appointment of senior level project coordination staff by MassHighway Commissioner Paiewonski. The Commonwealth owns the former railroad right-of-way, and the Executive Office of Transportation has indicated a readiness to grant an easement or long term lease. The Route 2 crossing of the BFRT is incorporated into the State's Route 2 Rotary reconstruction project.

As our country's focus is now on the greening of energy and transportation, investments in public infrastructure should demonstrate sustainability and contribute to a reduction in the human carbon footprint. Accordingly, we believe that this rail project should receive a High Priority status so that its completion can be expedited.

Sincerely,



Jamie Eldridge
State Senator
Middlesex & Worcester District



Steven Panagiotakos
State Senator
First Middlesex



Susan Fargo
State Senator
Third Middlesex



Cory Atkins
State Representative
Fourteenth Middlesex



Tom Conroy
State Representative
Thirteenth Middlesex



Jen Benson
State Representative
Thirty-Seventh Middlesex



Jim Arciero
State Representative
Second Middlesex